

ART. XX.—*Lectures in reply to the Croonian Lectures for 1854, of Charles West, of London, on the Pathological Importance of Ulceration of the Os Uteri.* By HENRY MILLER, M. D., Professor of Obstetric Medicine in the University of Louisville, etc. etc. From the Western Journal of Medicine. 8vo. pp. 71. Louisville, Ky., 1855.

In his review of Dr. West's lectures, Professor Miller appears to us to have overlooked the leading question discussed in them—the pathological importance of *ulceration of the os uteri*—and he has, consequently, brought a large amount of heavy artillery to bear upon a fortress which it does not appear that Dr. West had attempted to garrison or defend.

Dr. Miller must be aware of the very high rank that has of late years been assigned, in female pathology, to simple ulceration of the neck and mouth of the uterus. There are, in fact, physicians who would seem to refer to it nearly every uneasy sensation, every indication of disturbed health met with in the female, from puberty to the close of life, and whose therapeutics, in the major portion of her ailments, is circumscribed almost exclusively to the local application of nitrate of silver and other caustics, for the purpose of healing the ulcers which, with them, have, in a great measure, been constituted *fons et origo morborum femineæ*. While we have another class of physicians who consider these ulcers of comparatively unfrequent occurrence, or, when present, of secondary importance to the more grave diseases of which they are the result. The inquiry, therefore, into what is the actual pathological importance of ulceration of the os uteri would appear to be a very natural and proper one. This inquiry has been undertaken by Dr. West, and the mode in which he has conducted it, and the conclusions at which he has arrived having been presented to the profession, are fair subjects for criticism. If his facts, his arguments, or his deductions are erroneous, the cause of truth and of humanity requires that this should be made known, and a currency given to the exposition of his error or errors co-extensive with that which has been given to the latter. It is important, however, in testing the accuracy of the conclusions at which the inquirer has arrived, and the correctness of the process pursued by him in his investigation of the question at issue, that the real object and scope of his labours should be kept constantly in view, and all impeachment of improper motives and unfairness of conduct avoided. We are sorry to say that this course has not always been strictly observed by Professor Miller in his reply to the lectures of Dr. West.

One would suppose, from the general tenor of the criticism before us, that the inquiry undertaken by the Croonian lecturer for 1854, was into the general pathology of the uterus, instead of being restricted to the pathological importance of *ulceration of the os uteri*.

Professor Miller admits that the manner in which Dr. West has conducted the inquiry which constitutes the subject of his lectures "is courteous and dignified;" and yet he has not hesitated to accuse him of unfairness; of resorting to dishonourable means to disparage, and, "to the extent of his abilities," render contemptible the doctrine and practice of those from whom he differs; of the artifice of mutilating statements to suit his views; of the "vice of dissimulation;" of "an apparent ingenuousness," designed to entrap the unwary reader; of dealing, "throughout his lectures," in logical tricks, etc. etc.

Noticing the different results arrived at by Drs. Lee and West, from their respective examinations of the bodies of females, with the view of determining the frequency of the occurrence of lesions of the os and cervix uteri, Professor Miller asks, "How are we to reconcile this discrepancy between Dr. Lee and Dr. West? How, but by supposing that each found what he sought, and what he judged would be most effective in arresting the progress of the speculum. Prejudice is proverbially blinding in its influence, and under its dominion Dr. Lee, and those who saw for him, may not have seen what was plainly before their eyes; but it may likewise sharpen the sight, as in the case of Dr. West, and enable it to see what is hid from others."

We regret to find such a charge made by a gentleman holding so high and responsible a position in our profession as Professor Miller, and one who, by his talents and industry, has won for himself so fair a reputation. Admit the position he has assumed as correct, and we at once destroy the value of statistics in the settlement of any disputed medical question. And we would suggest that, if there is any weight in the accusation brought against Drs. Lee and West as to the "*einseitig und unrechtig*" manner in which their observations have been made and reported, the same accusation may with equal force be brought against the authority of Professor Miller's statements in regard to the result of his own examinations of the os and cervix uteri, in females labouring under sexual complaints; for we have no more evidence of prejudice on the part of either Dr. Lee or Dr. West, in regard to their views of uterine pathology, than we have of prejudice on his part in regard to his.

Let us have some faith in medical testimony. Though we may be forced to point out, in the statistics furnished us in support of one or other side of a disputed question, their inconclusiveness, in consequence of their limited character; their deficiency in various important points; their irrelevance to the question at issue; or their entire disagreement with others of a more extended, accurate, detailed, or relevant character, let us not doubt the honesty and good faith of those from whom they have emanated—especially when we know them to be distinguished and reputable members of the profession.

We confess that we have failed to detect any evidence of a partisan character in the Croonian lectures of Dr. West; they certainly exhibit much less of a partisan spirit than the lectures in reply of Professor Miller. Dr. West's mode of conducting the investigation of the pathological importance of ulceration of the os uteri may be shown to be erroneous, his reasoning defective, and all his conclusions false; but, from neither the language nor general tone of his lectures, have we any ground for inferring that he undertook the inquiry they are intended to elucidate with any bias for or against the views at which he has arrived, or for any other object than to arrive at truth.

It is not our intention to take any part in the controversy which has given rise to the lectures of Drs. West and Miller. We have made, it is true, quite a number of examinations, with the speculum, of the os and cervix uteri in females labouring under sexual diseases, and in others in whom we were led to suspect some affection of the lower portion of the womb; and in these examinations we have often detected unquestionable inflammation and ulceration, or hypertrophy of its neck and mouth; nevertheless, judging from our own examinations, and those at which we have assisted in patients under the care of other physicians, we have arrived at the conclusion that the frequency of inflammation and ulceration of these parts has been greatly exaggerated. Mere epithelial abrasions have unquestionably been taken for ulcerations, and a relaxed and engorged condition of the cervix for a state of chronic inflammation and enlargement—of the non-dependence of these abrasions and engorgements upon inflammation, we feel fully satisfied. Although of themselves of secondary importance, yet we cannot but view the condition of the cervix uteri under which these most commonly occur, as one demanding the closest attention on the part of the practitioner. We are far, however, from considering it to be one in which the application of the nitrate of silver, or any other caustic, will be found generally beneficial or curative. D. F. C.

---

ART. XXI.—*On the Construction, Organization, and General Arrangements of Hospitals for the Insane.* By THOMAS S. KIRKBRIDE, M. D., Physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane. Philadelphia, Lindsay & Blakiston, 1854. 8vo., pp. 80.

No other class of men in our country, not even professional architects, have so generally made the structure of buildings for the accommodation and treat-